

San Joaquin River Management Program Advisory Council Meeting

Wednesday, February 15, 2006

Stanislaus County Agricultural Center
Rooms H&I in the Stanislaus Building
3800 Cornucopia Way
Modesto, California

DRAFT AGENDA

- 9:00 a.m. Welcome and Introductions – Paula Landis, Chair
- 9:15 a.m. San Joaquin River Conceptual Restoration Plan – Carolyn Yale, EPA
- 9:45 a.m. The Benefits and Limitations of the South Delta Improvements Program - Paul Marshall, DWR
- 10:45 a.m. Fish and Wildlife Service Draft Refuge BMP Report – Dale Garrison, FWS
- 11:30 a.m. Other Business
- 12:00 a.m. Adjourn

SAN JOAQUIN RIVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ADVISORY COUNCIL

DRAFT MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Wednesday, February 15, 2006
Stanislaus County Agricultural Center
Modesto, California

Welcome and Introductions

The San Joaquin River Management Program (SJRMP) Advisory Council met at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center in Modesto, California. Paula Landis, Department of Water Resources (DWR), opened the meeting with announcements and introductions. Dale Garrison, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), was unable to attend the meeting due to a family emergency so the FWS draft Refuge Best Management Practices Report discussion will be tabled to the next meeting.

John Shelton, California Bay-Delta Authority, summarized the recent activity surrounding the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. The Independent Review of CALFED involving the Little Hoover Commission, the state Department of Finance and the private consultant firm of KPMG, is nearing completion. The recommendations from this review have been incorporated into a draft 10-Year Action Plan Framework that will guide the continued implementation of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. The Governor's budget will provide further direction for the program. It is anticipated that the Program will be reorganized and the CALFED Board and the Bay-Delta Committee may be dissolved. One possibility is to revitalize the California Water Commission, which has not been very active in the recent past, and focus on stakeholder involvement and the ability to lobby for funding.

San Joaquin River Conceptual Restoration Plan

Carolyn Yale, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is coordinating with Steve Chedester and Chris White of the San Joaquin River Management Coalition (RMC) to present the final San Joaquin River Conceptual Restoration Plan Phase 2. The funding to complete phases 1 and 2 of the Restoration Plan was provided by the EPA. Chedester and White were unable to attend the meeting so this discussion will be tabled until the next meeting.

Prop 50 funding was sought to complete the Restoration Plan, but the application scored below the minimum funding score and was not approved by the DWR

Director. Other conflicts with the application included the pending Judge Karlton's decision.

The Benefits and Limitations of the South Delta Improvements Program

Paul Marshall, DWR, presented the benefits and limitations of the draft South Delta Improvement Program. The Program EIR/EIS public comment period has closed and DWR is currently reviewing the comments. They have received about 21,000 comments; however many were duplicates as a result of fax and email campaigns. The objective of the program is to improve the water quality and protect salmon in the South Delta while providing a reliable water supply for Californians. The proposed actions to achieve the objective include the reduced movement of salmon in the South Delta via the Old River; maintain adequate water levels and quality for South Delta agricultural diversions; increase operational flexibility, increase deliveries to State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP) contractors, and opportunities for exports for fish and wildlife purposes. The actions are divided into two stages. Stage 1 is the physical/structural component that includes the installation of permanent operable gates, dredging, and alteration of local agricultural intakes. Stage 2 is the operational component that includes three operational scenarios and a non-operational component. There is a study currently being researched on the pelagic organisms decline in the South Delta. This study conclusion will be worked into the final EIR/EIS and into the Stage 2 planning.

Stage 1:

A fish passage permanent barrier will be located at the Head of Old River, and flow control gates will be constructed on the Middle River at the Victoria Canal confluence, on the Old River near the Tracy pumping plant, and at the outlet of the Grant Line Canal. Flow control gates will allow boat passage either by boat locks or pass over. Dredging is proposed for the Middle River because it has had sediment deposited in the main channel and is now at sea level; riparian vegetation will be avoided. Spot dredging is proposed in the Sugar Cut area because there is trouble with circulation in that region. Shallow intakes will be dredged to increase the water supply reliability for water users. Spoil from the dredging will be located either on agricultural land currently not in service or upland areas with poor habitat value. Spoil could also be used for levee repair or improvements. Stewart Track has offered to take any material for development of community levees.

Program benefits include: flexible operations, reduced annual cost, and improved South Delta circulation. The temporary barriers have flow constraints that must be considered before installation. Under these constraints the barriers may not be built at all in some years or may be removed and rebuilt as much as twice in one year. Current fish gate designs have limitations and can not be installed when the flow is above 7,500 cfs. They were not installed this year due to high

flows. The proposed fish gate will accommodate a flow of 10,000 cfs; if this flow is exceeded, the gate will act like a weir. The gate will be adjustable and can be set to any height, allowing for more flexibility during each season and for more efficient fish passage. All proposed actions will require maintenance but this annual cost is lower than the current cost of construction and maintenance of the temporary barriers.

Operation of the proposed barriers is very flexible and can be manipulated to suit water users, the environment, fish passage, and other needs as they arise. Various models were run to evaluate the different effects. EC would improve 16-18% in Old River on the average, 6-8% in Grant Line Canal, and 26% improvement in Middle River. Currently, EC increases due to agricultural returns to the channels and lack of good circulation in the Delta. According to the models, EC may increase between 0-2% in areas near Rock Slough, Old River at Highway 4 and the SWP pumping facility on the west side of the Delta; but may be as much as a 10-11% improvement in EC at the CVP pumping facility.

Some of the limitations of the SDIP include: no effect on EC at Brandt Bridge downstream of Vernalis, no proposed maintenance dredging program, salmon improvements can negatively affect smelt, boat locks require maintenance, and the interior EC is only as good as Old River. The Regional Water Quality Control Board has ordered that no barriers be installed during VAMP due to the decline in the Delta smelt. The boat maintenance costs are going to be kept low by only operating the locks during day light hours, and may be operated remotely.

Work on Stage 2 will begin in July or September 2006 after the EIR/EIS is certified construction will take two to four years to complete.

Fish and Wildlife Service Draft Refuge BMP Report

Kim Forrest, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, provided some information on the subjects that were included in the Wildlife Refuge Best Management Plan report that was to be presented at this meeting. Unfortunately Dan Welsh, FWS could not attend. Forrest reminded the group that this report is in the early draft phase.

Other Business

Lowell Ploss, San Joaquin River Group Authority, provided CD's of the 2005 annual technical report for the San Joaquin River Agreement and the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan. Ploss also discussed the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) report for the PL108-361 Cease and Desist order to meet water quality standards in the Delta. The agency has submitted their draft report to Washington without public comments. Sue Fry, USBR, discussed the project with SJRMP during the September 29, 2005 meeting and encouraged public input and input

from SJRMP members and requested that SJRMP provide an avenue for public access to the document when the draft copy is released for review. Ploss would like those SJRMP members that want to comment to send a letter to USBR requesting a draft copy for comment.

The Next Advisory Council Meeting: is scheduled on Wednesday, May 17, 2006 at 9:00 am at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center, Room HI.

**ATTENDEES AT
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
February 15, 2006**

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